

be dealt with, but I don't think you are going to see that because those people I have talked to have legitimate concerns. I have yet to find state employees coming to me that just want to go out and get their boss or they want to hurt somebody or they are out to harass their agency. I don't see that. The employees that have come to me have been people that have legitimate concern and need some help and they are fearful of even talking to me. They are fearful of getting ahold of me to express themselves because of the possibility that their employer might find out about it and thus, their job may be jeopardized and we need to bridge that gap, that concern and protect those people that do come to us and allow them a chance to be expressing themselves and yet not lose their employment. I think this is very much in keeping with our need to have efficient government. It is in keeping with our need to have a responsive government and I don't think you are going to see the problem Senator Peterson feels. I think you are going to see the State of Nebraska well served by this legislation. I would urge your opposition to the kill motion and support for the bill.

PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes Senator Higgins.

SENATOR HIGGINS: Mr. President, members of the Chamber, I would like to reiterate again as I did several times yesterday. The intent of the bill I certainly would agree with but as you read the bill on page 2, Section 18, or line 18 rather, you will notice it says, "agency shall mean any agency." That is a redundant statement. And it goes on to say, "department, board, commission, etc." It is underlined so that a green-horn like me might think this was new language in a bill. Actually this language is taken directly from Section 81-8240, subsection 1 which outlines the duties of the Ombudsman. Now, Senators, I want to ask you, was this bill introduced to do good or to make those who are voting for it look good to the public? I now have come to the conclusion that the reason they would not accept taxpayers as a commission to do this investigating of this "fraud and waste, etc.," that they continually talk about, is because they had to have the Ombudsman do it in order to exclude the Legislature and all of the legislative employees and the Governor and his staff and all these other people that they thought, Lord God in the morning, we don't want to offend too many and we don't want us to be investigated. But if they would have accepted a taxpayers commission to look into these complaints we wouldn't have been excluded. So now we know the real reason why they say the Public Counsel will be the one that the employees will go to is because of the way the statutes are written, that the Public Counsel cannot investigate any of these exceptions to the bill. I would also like to say this in defense of we elected officials. I think this bill has done more